Title

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Journal

Equity and Excellence in Education, 52(2-3)

ISSN

1066-5684

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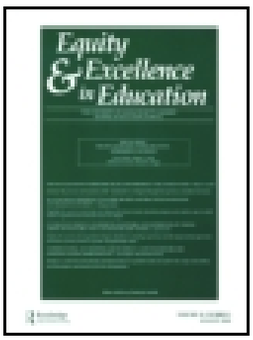
Publication Date

2019-07-03

DOI

10.1080/10665684.2019.1647809

Peer reviewed



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Equity & Excellence in Education

ISSN: 1066-5684 (Print) 1547-3457 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ueee20

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To cite this article: Leona Kwon & Cati V. de los Ríos (2019): "See, Click, Fix": Civic Interrogation and Digital Tools in a Ninth-Grade Ethnic Studies Course, Equity & Excellence in Education, DOI: 10.1080/10665684.2019.1647809

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2019.1647809

Published online: 26 Aug 2019.

EQUITY & EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2019.1647809

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"See, Click, Fix": Civic Interrogation and Digital Tools in a Ninth-Grade Ethnic Studies Course

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ABSTRACT

Drawing from the theoretical contributions of Ethnic Studies, activist new media, and critical digital literacies, this article explores the nature of a ninth-grade curricular unit about how one's daily environment impacts one's health and well-being. Using a combination of ethnographic and practitioner inquiry methods, the authors highlight an Ethnic Studies teacher's innovative and community-based pedagogy that honed students' critical digital literacies and civic action practices through their engagement with the digital media app "See, Click, Fix." Findings detail students' perspectives about how the unit both helped them resist deficit-oriented ideologies and served as a conduit for critical civic literacies. The authors contend that the fostering of critical digital literacies remain extremely imperative to the future and expansion of Ethnic Studies courses.

Social media and mobile app activity are undoubtedly transforming young people's engagement with communities, civic participation, and grassroots social movements (Jenkins, Shresthova, Gamber-Thompson, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Zimmerman, 2016; Kahne & Bowyer, 2019; Kahne, Hodgin, & Eidman-Aadahl, 2016). As technology continues to evolve, numerous scholars have called for the ongoing study of youth's digital and social media practices and the pedagogical potential of digital tools and platforms in K–12 classrooms (Moje, 2009; Stewart, 2015). Despite the expanding use of digital tools, classroom studies on the pedagogical affordances of such tools and how they enhance youth's critical digital literacies and civic participation—especially in Ethnic Studies classrooms—remain scarce (de los Ríos, 2018; Jocson, 2012; Stewart, 2015). Furthermore, the curricular priorities of digital literacies, civic education, and Ethnic Studies have been theorized separately from one another but, as our analysis demonstrates, their urgent integration can help all three gain a stronger foothold for twenty-first century inquiry and the promotion of racial justice.

Classroom-based studies have pointed to the ways that secondary Ethnic Studies courses provide fecund soil for social and political critique, robust academic literacy development, and imperative counternarratives to hegemonic U.S. curriculum (de los Ríos, 2017, 2018, 2019; Dueñas, López, & López, 2019; Jocson, 2008; Morrell, Dueñas, García, & Lopez, 2013; San Pedro, 2015; Valdez, 2017). An increasing number of public school districts have implemented Ethnic Studies courses in the last decade, especially after the 2016 signing of California Assembly Bill 2016, which aims to support future public school districts' efforts to implement Ethnic Studies courses at the secondary level. As Ethnic Studies courses increasingly become part of secondary public schools throughout the United States, especially with grassroots efforts to make these courses a graduation requirement (e.g., California Assembly Bill 2772), less is understood about the racism-conscious inquiry processes in these classrooms and how these courses prepare students for their increasingly inequitable, racialized, and digital social worlds.

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This article contributes to this growing body of literature by discussing a unit enacted by Leona (first author), which asked ninth-grade students in East Oakland to critically consider how their daily urban environment impacts their health and well-being. Guiding Leona's unit was the overarching question, *Is inequality making us sick*? Using a combination of ethnographic and practitioner inquiry methods, we highlight Leona's community-based pedagogy that honed students' civic and critical digital literacies through their engagement with the digital media app and website, "See, Click, Fix" (SCF). SCF is a digital communications system that employs both web and mobile app services that allows people to report infrastructural and non-emergency issues to local city government bodies. As researchers, our collaborative inquiry asked: *How do students, in their words, experience the SCF unit in their ninth-grade Ethnic Studies classroom?*

Here, we briefly review the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks that influence this study. We then delineate key facets of the curriculum and the methods used to collect and analyze the data, and then detail some of students' qualitative reflections on the assignments. We end with a discussion and implications for practicing educators and researchers. This study adds to the growing bodies of literature examining secondary Ethnic Studies curricula and pedagogy that acknowledge the changing digital technologies at young people's disposal, as well as the ways in which youth can take up such tools in critical ways inside of classrooms (Morrell et al., 2013).

Critical digital literacies, activist new media, and critical Ethnic Studies

This article extends the bodies of literature that point to the potential of digital media tools to amplify civic participation (Kahne & Bowyer, 2019; Mirra & Garcia, 2017) as well as the uptake of technology and digital literacies in Ethnic Studies classrooms (de los Ríos, 2017, 2018).

Critical digital literacies and activist new media literacies

Critical literacy is widely understood as the analytical reading and re-writing of the word and world in ways that disrupts power-laden hierarchies (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Souto-Manning, 2010). Digital literacies are often conceptualized as the plurality of literacies in the digital age (Ávila & Zacher Pandya, 2013; Bawden, 2008), spanning numerous technologies and media (Jocson, 2012, 2018; Stewart, 2015). Critical digital literacies extend these conversations to include the critical "analysis of and participation in digital ecologies" (Golden, 2017, p. 374) and elevate the distinctive skill sets and tools that youth engage as they critically read their increasingly digital and racialized worlds (Ávila & Zacher Pandya, 2013; Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016). Ávila and Zacher Pandya describe critical digital literacy as having two goals: "to investigate manifestations of power relations in texts, and to design, and in some cases redesign, texts in ways that serve other, less powerful interests" (p. 3). Furthermore, critical digital literacies afford young people diverse entry points to become designers of multimodal texts that represent their nuanced lives (Kress, 2003).

Building on Jenkins (2006), moreover, Garcia, Mirra, Morrell, Martinez, and Scorza (2015) contend that:

> Critical digital literacies are multifaceted. They are directly connected to academic literacies such as the preceding analysis of ethos, pathos, and logos. At the same time, they incorporate the participatory media practices in which students are involved outside of formal schooling. Thus, critical literacies are not ephemeral; they can and should be a part of sustained focus in various educational settings. (p. 164)

Indeed, the promotion and uptake of critical digital literacies in educational settings remain critical in this moment of normalized and systemic oppression. Yet, as students of color navigate and experience the rising visibility of fervent racism, xenophobia, and inequity, the mobilization for social change can be a daunting task. Thus, the cultivation of critical digital literacies inside secondary classrooms can help create important spaces for counter-narratives about students of color's communities to be written, produced, and presented.

Along these lines, research has considered how changing technology and access have created "an environment for politics that is increasingly information-rich and communication-intensive" (Bimber, 2001, p. 53). For example, Lievrouw's (2011) concept of alternative and activist new media push discourses toward the socially and politically transformative potential of new media literacies. Lievrouw defines activist new media literacies as those that "employ or modify the communication artifacts, practices, and social arrangements of new information and communication technologies to challenge or alter dominant, expected, or accepted ways of doing society, culture, and politics" (p. 19). Importantly, Lievrouw's scholarship around activist new media literacies does not halt at naming and critiquing social problems; it urges that projects must also "intervene in them" (p. 19) in critical and innovative ways. Activist new media literacies promote technologically mediated participation with specific political goals in mind and can result in a wide range of tactics. In this same spirit, Mirra and Garcia (2017) have worked to (re)position young people as "civic interrogators" and "civic innovators" in their expansive forms of online and off-line participation with twenty-first century community issues and social movements.

Numerous studies explore the important youth practices that engage digital tools, social media, and digital platforms in out-of-school spaces (Garcia et al., 2015; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Jocson, 2010; Lewis Ellison, 2017; Rolón-Dow, 2011; Vasudevan, 2010), however less has been documented within Common Core State Standards-aligned secondary classrooms (Jocson, 2018; Stewart, 2015). Moreover, outside of de los Ríos's (2018) recent study that examined an Ethnic Studies teacher's curricular unit using Vine—Twitter's former video platform—to hone bilingual students' critical digital literacies around oppressive discourses, there remains limited empirical research on the pedagogical nexus of critical digital literacies, youth civics, and activist new media in secondary Ethnic Studies classrooms. This study contributes to this nascent area of research.

Ethnic Studies as transformative pedagogy

Ethnic Studies courses center the academic terrains of race, racism, and the racialization of people (Hu-DeHart, 2004). Despite compelling evidence of rigor, empowerment, and academic achievement of Ethnic Studies courses at the K–12 level (Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, & Marx, 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016; Sleeter, 2011), there remains a lack of understanding about what these curricula are and entail (de los Ríos, 2018). What follows does not aim to be an exhaustive review of what constitutes Ethnic Studies teaching and learning; rather, we elevate notable studies that advance the discourses of Ethnic Studies pedagogies spanning elementary to secondary levels.

While empirical studies on K–12 Ethnic Studies have largely examined courses at the secondary level, urgent work has occurred in acute spaces of resistance with elementary-aged children both inside and outside of classrooms (Curammeng, Lopez, & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2017). Valdez's (2017) teacher research explores how she destabilized "the script" in her classroom through inserting supplemental texts that disrupted oppressive narratives of U.S. communities of color. In this same spirit but in an out-of-school context, Morales, Mendoza Aviña, and Delgado Bernal's (2016) work with the Adelante Project in Utah shows the value of creating an Ethnic Studies space outside of school for children of color—particularly one that is rooted in history, popular culture, and critical media literacy—to repair some of the colonial harm perpetuated by formalized systems of education.

Empirical literature examining the contours of Ethnic Studies curricula at the secondary level is larger yet still limited in scope (Sleeter, 2011). Acosta's (2007, 2013) work with Chicanx and Latinx literature, both inside and outside of formal schools, demonstrates the humanizing possibilities of pre-Columbian epistemologies and literature in literacy pedagogy. In comparison, Thomas (2017) examined a suburban group of racially diverse high school students enrolled in a Black Studies course, "African American Voice." Specifically, Thomas explored students' questions related to race and identity as they studied Black history, literature, and cultural and literary texts. Similarly, San

Pedro's (2015) research examines culturally sustaining pedagogy in an urban Native American literature course that contested the stereotypes associated with Native and Indigenous students' use of silence and reframed it as a form of "critical silent literacy." At the heart of these classrooms is the effort to equip students with the tools and "objective of systematically examining and dismantling institutional racism" (Hu-DeHart, 2004, p. 869). In turn, this study's research design focuses on young people actively engaging with Ethnic Studies curricula.

Research design

It is imperative that researchers build knowledge *with* teachers and communities in ways that are responsive to the challenges young people face as they agentively navigate myriad forms of intersectional oppression. Grounding action-oriented pedagogies in young people's everyday lived experiences is one way to amplify their desires and resist portrayals of historically subjugated people of color as simply damaged or conquered (Tuck, 2009). Thus, this study is rooted in a critical paradigm that vacates assumptions of detached objectivism and instead speaks from "particular race, class, gender and sexual identity locations" (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 218).

Positionality

Both authors are daughters of working-class immigrants who met through grassroots community connections a decade ago. In 2010, Leona, a Korean American woman, was a first-year teacher when she met Cati, a Chicana; Cati had been researching Ethnic Studies teachers and had interviewed Leona. Since then, we have developed an intimate friendship and are part of the same social justice mom group in Oakland, California. Our children were born three weeks apart and have been raised alongside one another, often attending the same community protests, museum exhibits, and social justice children's book fairs. As comrades, we have discussed at length the tensions and possibilities within the K–12 grassroots Ethnic Studies movement in California. By collectively writing about Leona's curricular and pedagogical approach, we felt we could open up a window into what Ethnic Studies courses work to accomplish and can look like for both aspiring and practicing teachers. Finally, as a university researcher, Cati felt the moral imperative to engage in "feminist solidarity" (Mohanty, 2003) with women of color anchored in struggles on the ground through not only writing *about* women of color Ethnic Studies teachers—often silenced by larger dynamics of patriarchy extant within social movements for change—but also writing *with* them.

Context

The study took place at an urban public high school in "Deep East Oakland" and serves some of the city's most socioeconomically disenfranchised residents where many students' families lived at or slightly above the poverty line. According to California Department of Education data at the time of the study, 55% of students were Latinx, 36% were African American, and 9% were Asian Pacific Islander. Additionally, 99% of students qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch. Leona's classroom included 16 freshmen: 6 African American students, 6 Latina/o/x students, 3 Southeast Asian students, and 1 student of Pacific Islander descent. Leona's Ethnic Studies course, for which she had been a co-founding teacher in 2011–2012, is now a graduation requirement at the high school. While race- and racism-evasive approaches to teaching are too often the norm in U.S. classrooms (Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, 2017), Leona noted that in her classroom, students explored central elements of racism (e.g., institutional, interpersonal, and internalized). Below is a snapshot of the 6 units' titles and overarching questions explored over the academic year (see Table 1). Leona devised these units through an iterative process, alongside an inquiry group, and with the generous

Table 1 Course curriculum snapshot

Unit 1	"Personal Identity"	How do different aspects of my identity shape experiences?
Unit 2	"Race as a Social Construct"	What is the concept of race? How and when was the idea of "race" created?
Unit 3	"Racial Hierarchies in the Gold Rush Era"	How were racial hierarchies strengthened during the Gold Rush time period?
Unit 4	"Three Levels of Oppression"	What are the various forms of oppression that people have experienced throughout history and in Oakland today?
Unit 5	"Standing Up!: Resistance and Liberation"	How have oppressed peoples *responded* to oppression with brilliance, solidarity, and resistance?
Unit 6	"Liberation in Action" (LiA)	How can I educate my community and myself about the challenges we face? How will I take steps toward transforming Oakland?

insight and support of Young Whan Choi, who was at one point the "Civic Engagement Coordinator" of OUSD.

In the following section, we delineate aspects of the last unit, "Liberation in Action."

Liberation in action (LiA)

This 6-week unit asked students to examine the factors that impact their quality of life, including the physical environment and the infrastructure problems in their community. In organizing this unit, Leona noted:

> For students who grow up in areas that have more urban blight and areas that are neglected by the city of Oakland, it's important to note that those conditions *do* impact them in these profound ways, especially in terms of their physical and mental health and that isn't always acknowledged or recognized by the city or school district. These social conditions need to be addressed structurally as well as in the curriculum if we really care about equitable education in this city. (personal communication, March 4, 2017)

To address this concern, students read articles from *The New York Times* and local Oakland newspapers about the social detriments of health; an overarching argument asserted that living in poverty has a negative impact on health outcomes and mental and emotional health. Students watched online clips of a Public Broadcasting System (PBS) documentary, *Unnatural Causes*, and read pieces of its attending curriculum found online that explores the importance of physical environments and provides explanations for the inequitable health disparities in the United States. Students also conducted their own field research by surveying their classmates to better understand and learn about how the conditions in their community—even their walk to and from school—can influence how they feel physically and emotionally. Leona and her students co-created the questions for the student surveys. The field research aimed at fostering a deepened understanding of the effects of students' immediate surroundings in East Oakland.

Students then took action by reporting infrastructural issues on the SCF mobile app and website (www.seeclickfix.com). Leona first asked students to play around, explore, and become acquainted with the various features of the SCF app and website. This "messing around" (Ito et al., 2010) included students honing their digital literacies and having opportunities to consider the communicative affordances associated with the SCF platform. Students were asked to register as users and report three issues in their communities. On the SCF app, one is able to take and upload photographs as evidence of infrastructural problems, like potholes, broken street lights, and illegal dumping. For the next six weeks, students tracked the progress on these issues and ultimately, though not discussed in depth in this article, presented their findings to the Life Enrichment Committee of Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). All Oakland city council members attended students' presentations to the Life Enrichment Committee meeting. Through their research and presentations, students skillfully interrogated their physical surroundings and argued that health and inequality are highly correlated, and, by exploring the infrastructural inequalities in Deep East Oakland, they shed light on just how much their communities unjustly endure (see Table 2).

Table 2 *Liberation in Action (LiA)* snapshot

Question	Task	Resources/Texts
What is See, Click, Fix?	Introduce students to SCF website	www.seeclickfix.com
What things do you see on your way to school?	Read articles on public health and low-income communities and build vocabulary	Report 3 infrastructural issues and journal on infrastructural issues you see in your community
How do infrastructural issues affect our communities?	Students co-create and disseminate survey on quality of life assessment	Jigsaw activity on health factors readings from PBS' Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making us Sick?
What do your peers see on their way to school?	Record what your peers share on the survey through a creation of a power point presentation	Students surveys
What do you want to communicate to city officials?	Prepare Final presentation for Oakland City Hall during the Life Enrichment Committee meeting	Use note cards for final presentations
What did you think of and learn from the SCF unit?	Pause and reflect on the learning gained from SCF	Post-SCF survey

Data collection and analysis

The authors sought out to investigate the following question: How do students experience the SCF unit in their ninth-grade Ethnic Studies classroom? As an Ethnic Studies teacher researcher, Leona offers a distinct vantage point to the dynamics involved in her classroom and throughout the unit. At the time of the classroom study, 16 students were enrolled and the data comes from all participating students. Following the tradition of practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), this study aimed to both understand patterns of student engagement and use emerging insights to inform ongoing practices and pedagogies. Over the course of the 2017 spring semester, Leona collected students' print and digital literacy artifacts and post-SCF reflections, and conducted one individual semi-structured interview with each student, each lasting about 25 minutes, around the nature of the SCF unit. Drawing from ethnographic methods, Cati engaged in weekly participant observation and collected field notes of classroom activities and the SCF final presentations. Furthermore, Cati conducted two one-hour semi-structured interviews with Leona. In students' SCF final projects, they included findings from their surveys that they had disseminated to their peers; we asked each group (comprising four students) to invite 6 to 9 students to participate in their survey. Students' advantage as "insiders" at their school site often included having the ability to capture more forthcoming responses to survey questions (Bautista, Bertrand, Morrell, Scorza, & Mathews, 2013). Although we did not analyze the student surveys, survey results were presented to the Life Enrichment Committee through the students' final PowerPoint presentations.

Given the scant literature on how youth engage in digital communication across the social and civic bounds of school (Garcia et al., 2015), we focus on students' perspectives as communicated in their interviews, oral presentations, final PowerPoint products, and post-SCF reflections. Students' presentations and interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed. Data were analyzed recursively during the research process, with both of us writing analytic memos and notes to identify patterns across the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data from the presentations, field notes, interviews, and reflections were sorted, organized, compared, and analyzed a total of three times (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). We developed codes (e.g., shame, meta-awareness of institutional racism, infrastructural neglect, community assets, civic literacy, desire for social action beyond the class project) inductively and looked for larger trends across student data that spoke to the research question (e.g., students resisting deficit narratives of their communities). In our collective analysis, we looked across the data to generate themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) about the ways that students interacted with and experienced the SCF project, and their overall response to the SCF app and website.

Fostering civic interrogation and critical digital literacies

According to students, the SCF unit magnified an array of neglected infrastructural issues that permeated low-income communities of color. All of the student presentations overwhelmingly identified the same infrastructural problems throughout their neighborhoods, including "graffiti, potholes, a lot of illegal dumping, lots of abandoned and dilapidated buildings, and broken public street and traffic lights" (student presentation, May 14, 2017). Armed with the terminology, discourses, and tools to name and civically interrogate systemic inequality and structural forms of racism, students had already attained an intimate awareness of their communities. In referencing the several dilapidated, abandoned, tagged-up buildings on her street, one student (María; all students' names are pseudonyms) shared, "This is what we have to see every day, just to get to school. We shouldn't have to feel this way going to school." Below we turn to the two primary themes that emerged from our data analysis.

" … people refuse to the see the positive things about us": Resisting deficit-oriented narratives

Racist discourses throughout history have positioned students of color through pathologizing and deficit lenses (Lewis, 1965) that locate social inequalities in "deficiencies" in the cultures, practices, skills, values, languages, and activities of communities of color instead of in larger social structures of power, racism, and U.S. federal policies (Valencia, 2002). In contrast, many of Leona's students and their peers promptly identified strengths and assets in their communities, as evidenced in the surveys that students distributed. Among the assets that students named were: caring families, brilliant people, hard workers, bi/multi-lingualism, rich cultural and ethnic diversity, and a commitment to education and to the city of Oakland, among others (field note, May 15, 2017). Tran, a Vietnamese American student, succinctly shared her perspective: "East Oakland has a bad rap and lots of folks just look down on us." Equipped with a meta-awareness of the pathologizing narratives that frame people of color in East Oakland, students worked to denounce those deficit orientations. Tran's PowerPoint presentation referenced the project and the experience it brought her:

> I see a ton of trash everywhere. The community overall looks pretty dirty. But to me, that doesn't really represent who the people in this community are because there are a lot of really bright people who can make a change, it's just that the dominant narrative of people living here is just so negative that people refuse to see the positive things about us.

The community about whom Tran's speaks so passionately is comprised entirely of people of color.

In a follow-up conversation, Tran added that too often "people are racist and look down on low-income people of color just based on how our neighborhoods look like" (field note May 17, 2017). An abundance of "damage-centered" (Tuck, 2009) scholarship and narratives have long worked to harm marginalized East Oakland communities of color. By jettisoning oppressive "culture of poverty" narratives about the people in East Oakland as "broken," Tran articulates a reclamation of her prized community. In many ways, engaging the SCF mobile app fostered students' critical digital literacies through offering them multiple opportunities for becoming creators and designers of multimodal texts (Kress, 2003)—primarily their PowerPoints—that problematized and interrogated the inequitable conditions of their communities. Students, like Tran, starkly juxtaposed the conditions of their East Oakland neighborhoods with more affluent nearby areas as well as raised concerns about health in their local community. For instance, East Oakland residents face a greater risk for health-related issues like asthma than the predominantly white, middle-class residents living in the Oakland hills less than 2 miles away (field note, May 15, 2017). Tran's comment points to the hallmarks of Ethnic Studies curricula, which include (a) bringing to the fore the material realities of institutional and structural oppression, (b) challenging the preponderance of deficit-oriented discourses about communities of color, and (c) upending the internalized oppression that such discourses imbue in adolescents of color (Acosta, 2013; de los Ríos, 2013, 2017, 2018)

Similarly, Korvon, an African American student, echoed Tran's sentiments with the overwhelming presence of trash in their urban neighborhoods. Korvon shared:

> People just think we [people of color] like to trash our communities and don't even care to use trash cans, but it's not true because they're always full and overflowing … It's actually the city government that's not providing us with enough trash bins throughout East Oakland.

In this statement, Korvon resists the stereotypically deficit rhetoric that attribute the high presence of trash as solely his community's doing and instead reframes the discourse of pollution as infrastructural neglect. Through the SCF unit, Korvon was able to engage in participant observation of his community, document photographs using the SCF app, and foster his critical digital inquiry and literacy practices. Moreover, Korvon ultimately built a critical analysis whereby he traced East Oakland's abundance of trash as primarily the fault of the city government's inadequate attention to the needs of East Oakland, primarily through their lack of trash services and trash bins.

Dominic, a Mexican American student, offered his response to this project, "I've felt a deep shame about how our city looks … [but these conditions] don't represent us." In Dominic's group presentation, he resisted these precise forms of internalized shame by reversing the lens to highlight larger structures of inequality. Dominic elaborated:

> Based on our survey data, we believe that the quality of our environment and infrastructure greatly impact the residents of that vicinity. Students who live in neighborhoods [that] consist of urban blight or decay, like ours, usually [have] negative feelings towards their own neighborhoods and shows that there is institutional neglect.

Among the most important distinctions of Ethnic Studies curricula, which Dominic aptly points us to, is that they seek to prepare students as civic agents by equipping them with the tools to accurately name the social conditions of their communities and then work to socially transform them (de los Ríos, López, & Morrell, 2015). By positioning "structural and material inequities up to the light of inquiry" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 86), Dominic and his peers confidently identified, problematized, and took action on the material realities that affect their lives. The use of SCF in the Ethnic Studies class helped us achieve an activist new media practice where students not only intervened (Lievrouw, 2011) but also explored related issues of social concern (Cohen & Kahne, 2012), contested negative associations of their racialized communities, and (re)named their very own experiences as infrastructural neglect. Thus, students were "better prepared with the knowledge and resources to engage as public intellectuals and participate in their public sphere" (Bautista et al., 2013, p. 7), which we more clearly turn to next.

"We also have a say in this city": Repositioning digital tools for civic interrogation

An overarching sentiment about the SCF project was that, as a digital tool, it elevated students' consciousness and community participation, and motivated participating students to "come together to fight for change" in Oakland (post-SCF reflection, May 30, 2017). Our conception of civic engagement here draws upon the work of educational and political scholars who underline participation in political and public spheres (Flanagan & Faison, 2001), especially those "connected directly to the state and its institutions and those composed of community members drawn together around issues of shared concern" (Mirra & Rogers, 2016, p. 3).

Meanwhile, some students like Alejandra shared, "I honestly thought SCF would fix all of our problems." And others, like Michael, felt that it was "on us" to bring about change given students' awareness of the dire neglect by those in power in the city of Oakland (field note, May 10, 2017). Sione, a student of Pacific Islander descent, shared in his post-SCF reflection on May 15, 2017:

> The City of Oakland doesn't really do much unless we speak up. Realizing how illegal dumping and everything else affects us health wise … [helped me] to take action and see a way to prevent or *help* to prevent it.

Sione articulated a desire to "help prevent" some of these inequities which is an important sentiment in youth civics literature which reflects the movement from agenda-setting to opinion formation and action taking, which are at the core of all political life (Kahne et al., 2016). Another student, Consuelo, noted that critical digital literacies are essential to any form of civic participation:

> Today the way social and racial justice happens in society is that people usually depend on online. Like going on apps, websites, social media. So, if I have a problem in the future I will have to go online spreading it to my friends and asking others for help … And searching online, doing my research.

Consuelo's comment echoes what Cohen and Kahne (2012) call participatory politics, in which interactive, peer-based acts have the ability to reach large online audiences and shape agendas through dialogue, as well as exert greater agency through the circulation of information and the production of original content both online and offline.

LiA emphasized public speaking skills as central to the repositioning of digital tools for civic interrogation. Students also pointed to public speaking as an important element of this project; Edessa noted:

> For the See, Click, Fix Project, I personally reported two large illegal dumpings and two broken street lights in my neighborhood because it's too dark at night and is dangerous for both cars driving and people walking in the neighborhood … So, if you wanted to resist racial oppression you need strong public speaking skills, which is what we had to work on for this project. It's important because usually you need to stand up and speak out for whatever you want to change. In order for that to work though, you need practice or people will probably not take you seriously.

Echoing previous secondary Ethnic Studies scholarship that pushes youth civics and inquiry (Akom, Shah, Nakai, & Cruz, 2016; Cammarota, 2016), the SCF unit invited youth to participate as civic agents in their community and come together to deliberate about their experiences, concerns, and insights in order to promote a more informed, intellectually engaged, and inclusive public (Garcia et al., 2015). Through reflection, students connected the readings from class with their own lives through the SCF app and the collective action research. Additionally, students fostered public presentation, public speaking, academic and media literacy, and argumentative skills as they became co-creators of research analysis and activist new media texts that named and acted on their social worlds (Bautista et al., 2013).

By building upon students' everyday digital and mobile app literacies, educators can better respond to the democratic purposes of schooling (Kahne et al., 2016). As such, in reflecting on her students' experiences with this unit, Leona shared in an interview:

> Something that was very powerful in doing this assignment was feeling heard … so many of our students feel marginalized. I mean they've had some pretty terrible experiences with the city of Oakland, whether that be through interactions with police, inadequate education, and so forth. I mean half of my students' teachers were substitutes in middle school, and then you wonder why some of them are two years below grade level in terms of reading, they have experienced such intense levels of racial and institutional oppression. That using this tool and working on this project has allowed them to feel validated and allowed them to be heard … And that's something really beautiful.

Leona powerfully speaks to the racialized disparities that East Oakland youth of color are subjected to through structural racism and inequitable urban schooling. Leona's assignment did not simply help students learn more about how urban blight negatively affects people and communities, but also to understand the complex power dynamics inherent in contemporary research processes. Specifically, Leona's curriculum (a) featured civics-oriented lesson plans and engaged digital tools and new media to elicit social change, and (b) led students to engage in inquiry processes that helped them articulate arguments, critique social structures, and use systematized evidence to enter civic conversations around institutional racism.

Civic education and digital tools in the age of Ethnic Studies expansion

Digital tools remain central to the lived political and civic realities of young people. However, teachers simply incorporating students' social media practices, photography, and digital apps in the classroom will not automatically lead to social transformation. Without an acute lens of systemic racial inequity and the honing of students' critical digital literacies, these classroom projects can easily reproduce harm and "damage-centered" narratives (Tuck, 2009) in historically marginalized communities. Essential to note here is that the SCF unit anchored itself in a rigorous study of structural racism in students' local community and youths' broader "participatory culture" (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robinson, & Weigel, 2006), and incorporated critical practices that Kahne et al. (2016) describe as central to youth civic engagement with digital technology: "investigation and research, dialogue and feedback, [and] production and circulation" (p. 9). Moreover, this study aligns with Kahne and Bowyer's (2019) recent findings that classroom-based efforts to promote critical media and digital literacies—when done carefully and thoughtfully—can lead to increased levels of youth engagement in online participatory politics and increased engagement in "Targeted Political Pressure" around issues affecting communities.

These forms of critical digital and media literacy are extremely vital to the future and expansion of Ethnic Studies courses, especially given Ethnic Studies' commitment to building literacies around racialization, dismantling structural forms of oppression, and working toward liberation. As school districts across the country swiftly move to adopt Ethnic Studies courses, it is imperative that they take heed of Leona's detailed care, iterative approach, and steadfast fidelity to what constitutes Ethnic Studies in practice—a pedagogy that foregrounds self-determination and anti-racism, transcends the confines of classroom walls, and takes learning and social action into the streets and local community. Moreover, with the ubiquity of mobile phones and other forms of technology accessible in communities of color, "digital tools will continue to provide opportunities to organize, mobilize, and transform social and material conditions in all communities" (Akom et al., 2016, p. 1297). As such, the SCF app provided pathways for new forms of digital communication in the classroom and afforded students opportunities to participate more actively in civic life and discourses. Furthermore, the SCF app and project allowed students to build and enact critical solidarity (Jocson, 2018), or "the strategic application of creative and critical forms of literacies toward social action" (p. 52), within and across important youth digital media landscapes. Mirra and Garcia (2017) remind us that teachers must not simply integrate civic discourses, but rather *(re)imagine* what constitutes community-based participation, what civics can look like in our classrooms, and especially the role that digital tools and apps play in the lives and ingenuity of marginalized young people of color.

There are countless ways that youth are civically participating in their complicated and inequitable social worlds, however, not enough K–12 classrooms are working to support and hone these online and offline practices. It is becoming increasingly urgent to document the ways in which educators are engaging in both large and small curricular efforts to advance activist new media literacies and critical digital civic inquiry in their classrooms (Jocson, 2018; Kahne et al., 2016). Furthermore, Ethnic Studies classrooms are already spaces where innovative and alternative forms of civic education are occurring and Leona's classroom is a testament to that. Leona thoughtfully created a community-responsive curriculum that linked infrastructural issues within students' environments to a digital app and classroom processes to embolden students to read, write, and act to socially transform their communities. The field of education still has much to learn from the ways in which Ethnic Studies classrooms have been positioned as conduits for civic interrogation and action (Cammarota, 2016; de los Ríos et al., 2015). As Mirra and Garcia (2017) note, "The future of civic education scholarship must engage more forcefully with youth agency, critical perspectives, and digital forms of expression" (p. 138), which makes Ethnic Studies classrooms among the ideal curricular spaces to hone the necessary community-based and activist new media practices that will help bring forth a more socially just world.

Acknowledgments

Our sincere gratitude goes to Joseph Kahne and Nicole Mirra for their insightful feedback on this manuscript. We also deeply thank Young Whan Choi for his support on this larger project as well as Equity & Excellence in Education's editors and anonymous reviewers.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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